

The IDVA Update



Mitch Daniels - Governor
Tom Applegate - Director

July 2007

The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Newsletter

Summer Edition

Senate Bills 480 and 1092 Signed in to Law



By Mary Beth Schneider

Several hundred members and veterans of the armed forces got a thank-you Thursday May 3rd, from Indiana as Governor Mitch Daniels signed into law two bills that enhance their benefits.

Speaking to a crowd at the Indiana World War Memorial that included many veterans and members of the Indiana National Guard, Daniels said the changes were long overdue.

"Today we say . . . there will not be a state in America that expresses its reverence, its gratitude, its appreciation to the soldiers of today and yesterday more than we do," Daniels said.

The governor added that the upgrade in benefits was a bipartisan effort. "Nobody ever intended that our treatment of our veterans (should) slip out of date; we just simply lost sight of it for awhile. This bill catches us up in a big way."

Daniels signed into law Senate Enrolled Act 480,

which exempts active-duty military pay from Indiana's income tax and increases the maximum allowable state income-tax deduction on military pay -- including retirement and survivors' benefits -- to \$5,000 from the current \$2,000, or \$10,000 for couples filing jointly.

In addition, the new law lets active-duty service members stationed in Indiana -- and their dependents -- pay in-state tuition rates at public universities; expands a high school diploma program to include veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars while establishing scholarships for National Guard members; and provides matching funds of up to \$450,000 annually for the Indiana Military Families Relief Fund. The fund provides grants to those who face financial emergencies while their spouses are deployed.

Daniels also signed into law House Enrolled Act 1092, which exempts people on active military duty from jury service. It also allows up to 10 days of unpaid absence from work for family members of those called to active duty.

Daniels said Indiana is determined not to let its soldiers "fade away in our memory."

For more information on the recent legislative changes go to pages 7 - 9 of this newsletter.

Indiana Guard's Muscatatuck, Not Your Average Training Site

By Lt. Col. Deedra Thombleson and Sgt. Tommi Meyer, Indiana National Guard Public Affairs

In May of 2005, the Indiana National Guard took the first step toward creating the nation's premier urban training site at the official ribbon cutting for



Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels speaks at the April 17th press conference announcing the Army funding for Muscatatuck Urban Training Center, an Indiana National Guard facility.

Photo by SSGT Michael Krieg, Indiana National Guard, Public Affairs.

Muscatatuck Urban Training Center (MUTC) in Southeast Indiana's Jennings County.

The site is a secluded, self-supporting town complete with hospital, school, fire department, residential area, office buildings, power plant, and even a water treatment facility. Prior to 2005 it had been home to the Muscatatuck State Developmental Center for mentally and physically impaired Indiana citizens.

Now, nearly two years after the Guard stepped in, the new concept for MUTC is moving forward at rapid speed, thanks to a comprehensive funding package and partnership with Department of the Army.

"From the beginning, our vision has been to transform Muscatatuck into a national center of excellence for urban training, one focused on honing our nation's capability to respond to crises, both abroad and here in the homeland," said Major General R. Martin Umbarger, the Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard. "Now we can see that transformation move forward."

In its first two years of operation, the 1,000 acre site has been host to multiple training events, both civilian and military. Though the 70 existing buildings and surrounding infrastructure provided the backdrop for realistic and much sought after urban training, the future for MUTC is much more robust.

The 97.3 million dollar funding package and two phase plan, includes infrastructure and building modifications, instrumentation and base operating costs. When fully operational, the site is expected to accom-

modate training for approximately 40,000 active and reserve component troops a year, while still supporting civilian training events. In 2006 the site was utilized by a much smaller 19,000 total man-days of use.

The agreement between the Indiana National Guard and Department of the Army calls for the establishment of support staff that will include about 290 fulltime civilian and military personnel, a large increase from the current staff of about 70.

"Muscatatuck will now become a major contributor to our national security, and a major contributor to the economy of southern Indiana," said Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels.

The enhanced site will host up to 10 major training events per year, with the first large-scale event scheduled for May.

Events in May, actually a multi-faceted joint exercise, will involve local, state and federal civilians as well as National Guard and active component troops.

Two exercises will be conducted in coordination with each other so as to replicate a real-world response to a major terrorist attack in the homeland. The scenario will be that of a simulated detonation of a nuclear device in a major metropolitan area with Muscatatuck replicating the targeted city.

Indiana National Guard's exercise, VIGILANT GUARD, will be the first to be executed, representing the National Guard's role as our nation's first military responder in time of domestic emergency. The exercise will involve the deployment of some 2,000 Guard Soldiers into the exercise area, employing their advanced terrorist response capabilities. The exercise will rigorously test their ability to support local and state civilian authorities, incident and unified commanders and the State Emergency Management Agency. As in a real-world response, the National Guard forces will be the first-in, last-out military response force in the combined exercise.

US Northern Command's exercise, ARDENT SENTRY/NORTHERN EDGE 07, will replicate the

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federal military role in support of the lead federal agency, reinforcing the capabilities of the local first responders and those of the National Guard already committed to the simulated crisis.

For more information about MUTC or the upcoming exercises, readers may visit the Indiana National Guard site at www.inarng.org or the Muscatatuck site www.mutc.org.

County Veteran Service Officer, Loran Rutledge Retires



Loran Rutledge, the Montgomery County Veterans' Service Officer since 1967, retired effective June 30th. Rutledge has long been a veterans' advocate in Crawfordsville and Montgomery County and will be missed.

The County Commissioners threw him a retirement party on June 19th and IDVA was there to present him with a plaque and The Governor's Award for Meritorious Service.

KEEPING THE PROMISE

Benefits and Services for Former Prisoners of War Part II

By Bill Young
POW Coordinator
HEALTH CARE

The VA health care system affords priority treatment for former POWs. Former POWs who have a service-connected disability are eligible for VA health care. This includes hospital, nursing home, and outpatient treatment.

Former POWs who do not have a service-connected disability are eligible for VA hospital and nursing home care – without regard to their ability to pay.

They are also eligible for outpatient care on a priority basis – second only to veterans with service-

connected disabilities.

While former POWs are receiving treatment in an approved outpatient treatment program, they are eligible for needed medicines, glasses, hearing aids, or prostheses.

Former POWs are also eligible for all needed dental care.

There is no co-payment requirement for former POWs at VA pharmacies.

Is Special Assistance Available to Former POWs at the VA Medical Centers?

The Indianapolis, Indiana VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Gerry Burrus at (317) 988-4331.

The Marion and Fort Wayne, Indiana VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Sarah Pettice 1-800-498-8792 x75751.

The Chicago (Westside), Illinois VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Dr. Lewis Coulson at (312) 569-6260.

The Danville, Illinois VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Tim Kohlbecker at (217) 554-4260.

The Marion, Illinois VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Georgi Warren at (618) 997-5311 x 54278.

The Cincinnati, Ohio VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Tina Cole at (513) 475-6464.

The Dayton, Ohio VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Sheryl Yarbrough
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at (937) 268-6511 x 1073.

The Louisville, Kentucky VA Medical Center has a coordinator for former POWs. Any former POW who needs special assistance should call Wanda Wilkerson at (502) 287-5729.

Are There Benefits for Survivors of Former POWs?

Yes. The major benefit is Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) which is a monthly benefit payable to the surviving spouse (and the former POW's children and parents in some cases) when the former POW:

- 1 was a service member who died on active duty; *or*
- 2 died from service-related disabilities; *or*
- 3 died on or before September 30, 1999 *and* was continuously rated totally disabled for a service connected condition (including individual unemployability) for at least 10 years immediately preceding death; *or*
- 4 died after September 30, 1999, *and* was continuously rated totally disabled for a service-connected condition (including individual unemployability) for at least 1 year immediately preceding death.

DIC is terminated for a surviving spouse who remarries, but can be resumed if the remarriage ends in death, divorce, or annulment. However, a surviving spouse who remarries *on or after* attaining age 57, and *on or after* December 16, 2003, can continue to receive DIC.

Are There Other Benefits for Former POWs and Their Dependents/Survivors?

The following are other significant VA benefits to which certain veterans may be entitled: disability pension, medical care, education and training, home loan guaranty, and burial benefits. Certain disabled veterans may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation and employment services, insurance, clothing allowance, special adapted housing assistance, and specially adapted automobile equipment. Certain dependents/survivors may be entitled to health care,

death pension, education and training, home loan guaranty, and burial in a national cemetery. See other VA fact sheets on those benefits, or contact VA for more information.

Note: This is the final installment of a two-part series.

State Approving Agency



GI Bill Benefits Available to Reserve and National Guard Members

The Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserves (MGIB SR), Chapter 1606, is available to members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Reserves, as well as the Army National Guard and the Air Guard.

Beside the MGIB SR, activated reserve and Guard Service Members (SM) have two other GI Bill options. The first gives those who serve continuously for 24 or more months on active duty, the option to pay into the GI Bill for active duty (Chapter 30). The second program, called the [Reserve Education Assistance Program \(REAP\)](#), Chapter 1607. REAP provides activated reserve and guard members up to 80 percent of the GI Bill for active duty (Chapter 30). This program is explained below.

The MGIB SR Chapter 1606 benefit is worth over \$10,000. This amount is based on the 2006 monthly full-time student payment rate of \$297 multiplied by the 36 month limit. This "payment rate" automatically increases on October 1 each year. You get the increase no matter when you became eligible or start using it. *(Continued on next page)*

MGIB SR Eligibility

To be eligible for the MGIB SR you must meet the following criteria:

- Agree to a six-year obligation to serve in the Selected Reserve or Guard signed after June 30, 1985. If you are an officer, you must have agreed to serve six years in addition to your original obligation.
- Complete your initial active duty for training (IADT).
- Meet the requirement to receive a high school diploma or equivalency certificate before completing IADT.
- Remain in good standing while serving in an active Selected Reserve unit.

Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP)

REAP was signed into law on October 28, 2004 to provide over \$28,000 of GI Bill benefits for Activated Reservists.

REAP (Chapter 1607) is a Department of Defense/VA education benefit program designed to provide educational assistance to members of the Reserve components called or ordered to active duty in response to a war or national emergency (contingency operation)* as declared by the President or Congress.

The Federal Department of Veterans Affairs will administer the program and pay benefits from funds contributed by Department of Defense (DOD). However, the DOD and Department of Homeland Security determine eligibility.

Chapter 1607 benefits cannot be used with other VA educational benefits. However, if you are eligible for a Chapter 1606 kicker (College Fund), you can still be paid that kicker while receiving Chapter 1607.

REAP benefits are potentially payable from December 9, 2001 (90 days after September 11, 2001) for persons who were serving on a contingency operation on September 11, 2001 and who were in school on December 9, 2001. The Department of Defense may provide further guidance as to the retroactive nature of this program.

Note: "Contingency operations" as defined in title 10 U.S. Code means "Military operations that are designated by the Secretary of Defense as an operation in which members of the armed forces are or may become involved in military actions, operations or hostilities against an enemy of the United States or against opposing military force; or results in the call or order to, or retention on active duty of members of the uniformed services..."

Change to Policy for GI Bill Benefits Available to Reserve and National Guard Members

If a mobilized service member, eligible for Chapter 1607 (REAP), stops drilling with the National Guard or Reserve, they can utilize Chapter 1606 (MGIB-SR) benefits for the length of their (90 day+) mobilization *plus 4 additional months*. This change is in effect because:

- Troops could not use 1606 while they were mobilized, so they are "owed" that time; plus 4 additional months.
- They cannot now use 1607 since they must have a 90-day mobilization and still be drilling.

VA and DOD have finally agreed, and most importantly, VA Claims Examiners are adjudicating, i.e. paying the benefits, that the mobilized Vet can get paid 1606 for Mobilization time (total months noted on DD 214) *plus 4 additional months*.

HOWEVER:

The clock starts the day they stop drilling and runs out at their mobilization time plus 4 months!

Example:

National Guard soldier SGT Smith was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom for a total of 16 months:

- 1. 2 month train up,*
- 2. 13 months in Iraq and,*
- 3. 1 month demobilization.*

SGT Smith is now eligible for Chapter 1607, which pays at twice the rate as Chapter 1606, which he uses for 3 months.

SGT Smith's contract is up and does not re-enlist. SGT Smith's last drill date is March 31, 2007.

SGT Smith can use 20 months of Chapter 1606 (16 months for mobilization plus 4 additional months), beginning April 1, 2007.

Indiana's State Approving Agencies

Representing the IDVA SAA Eastern/southeastern region is myself, Tim Maley and I can be reached at 317-232-

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3917. Northern Region is Ron Rousch at 317-232-3914 and for the Southern Region, please contact Mrs. Vicki Baker at 317-232-3916.

If you have questions concerning proprietary education (privately owned trade or vocational schools & institutions of higher learning) contact the Indiana Commission on Proprietary Education. Marsha Thornton at 317-232-1327 or Tara Adams at 317-234-3307, will assist you with these programs.

Thank you for your assistance and support of veterans' vocational and educational advancement.



First Annual Hoosier Women Veterans Conference a Success

Catching up with men.

Once limited to support roles, military women increasingly find themselves closer to the front lines; VA wants to make sure they get the benefits they're entitled to.

By Rob Schneider
rob.schneider@indystar.com
April 15, 2007



Featured speaker, Major L. Tammy Duckworth, Illinois Director of Veterans' Affairs, and Kris Bertrand, Indiana Women Veterans' Coordinator, pose for a picture at the first state-sponsored conference for women.

At Indiana's first state-sponsored conference for female veterans Saturday April 14th, Major Tammy Duckworth and Dorothy Webb represented the spectrum of roles women have had in the armed services.

Duckworth, a speaker at the conference, was dressed in her Army fatigues and was treated like a rock star, signing autographs and then posing for pictures with the more than 100 women in attendance.

She is the head of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs but held a different job several years ago. She was the commander of a 15-ship Black Hawk helicopter company and flew more than 200 combat hours in Iraq.

In November 2004, the cockpit of her helicopter was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade and exploded. Duckworth, 39, lost part of one leg below the knee and the other above the knee, and she walks with the aid of prosthetic legs.

Webb, 91, or "91 and a half" as she likes to say, never got to go overseas, but she felt compelled to serve her country just as Duckworth did. The Muncie resident joined the Navy in December 1942 and served as "store keeper" in Memphis, Tenn., and Boston for three years. Her brother was going into the military, as was everyone at that time, Webb recalled. "I thought the least I could do was help."

"It's amazing," she said of the roles women now play in the military.

Those changes are what prompted the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs to hold the conference, said the agency's director, Tom Applegate.

"Women come closer to being on front lines every day now," he said.

In a state with 32,000 female veterans, the state appointed Kris Bertrand as the first women veterans' coordinator last year. The agency held the conference in part to ensure female veterans are aware of the benefits they are entitled to, she said.

Fewer than 3,000 women are signed up with Veterans Affairs, and some women might think that because they did not serve in combat, they aren't entitled to benefits, Bertrand said.

Another reason to reach out to women is that female soldiers are increasingly facing the same dangers as their male counterparts.

"It used to be the boys' club," Bertrand said of the men who came home with injuries. "Now women are coming back with the exact same injuries the guys

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have and the exact same issues the guys have."

Female veterans' conferences are becoming more common, particularly with the number of women now serving, said Marilla Cushman, a spokeswoman for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. The foundation, based in Washington, D.C., studies the history of America's military women. The need for the conferences reflects the types of jobs women now hold in the military.

"They are facing the same risks and are coming home requiring the same care and benefits," Cushman said.

Some women such as Ruth Freese, 57, Franklin, who served in the Air Force from 1972 to 1993, saw the conference in the Indiana Government Center as a chance to meet other women who had gone through similar experiences.

Mary Meehan, 22, Kokomo, served in the Air Force for 2 ½ years as a munitions specialist in England and wanted to learn more about veterans' benefits she may be entitled to. Meehan, who is now in college, doesn't know any other female veterans at home and wanted to know what it had been like for older servicewomen.

Betty Reed, 83, Lafayette, arrived wearing a bright red sweatshirt bearing the words "Indiana Women's Veterans." She served in the Coast Guard during World War II and was stationed in New Orleans.

"We never left the country," she said.

"Our motto was we relieved a man for sea duty. I can't always say they were happy about it," Reed said and then laughed.

Reed said one of the best compliments she ever received was when a servicewoman told her that women have careers in the military today because of the job that women like Reed did in World War II.

"It made you feel super," she said, smiling.



Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman and Women Veterans Conference speaker Major L. Tammy Duckworth exchange a few words at the conference.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Number of women serving in the U.S. military on active duty as of May 2006: 202,248.
- Number of female veterans in the U.S. as of September 2006: 1.7 million.
- Number of female veterans in Indiana: 32,620.
- U.S. female soldiers' deaths in Iraq from March 19, 2003, to March 24, 2007: 71; wounded: 467.
- U.S. female soldiers killed in Operation Enduring Freedom from Oct. 7, 2001, through March 24, 2007 (includes areas in and around Afghanistan, the Philippines and southwest Asia): 12; wounded, 9.

Sources: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense and Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation.

New Legislation

The month of April was a very busy time for Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs, four bills were signed in to law by the governor, that increase benefits to Hoosier Veterans and the military.

Listed on the next page is a synopsis of the four bills: SE 287, SE 480, HE 1546, and HE 1092.

SE 287

Property Tax Deductions

- Increases the assessed value of the real property owned by the veteran from \$113,000 to \$143,160 under tax code 1.

SE 480

- Exempts active duty military pay for deployment earned by members of the national guard and reserve components of the United States armed forces from the individual income tax.
- Increases the military pay income tax deduction from \$2,000 to \$5,000.
- Provides that a taxpayer may not claim both the new exemption and the existing deduction for military income.
- Expands the high school diploma program for eligible veterans to include veterans of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.
- Specifies that active duty military personnel stationed in Indiana and their dependents are eligible for resident tuition rates at state educational institutions.
- Authorizes the: (1) advisory board of the division of professional standards of the department of education; and (2) various professional licensing boards; to adopt rules to expedite the licensure of individuals whose spouses are stationed on active duty in Indiana.
- Provides State matching funds of up to **\$450,000** (100 K more) annually for Indiana Military Families Relief Fund
- Establishes employment criteria for employees of the Indiana department of veterans' affairs (department) and local service officers.

- Provides that a power of attorney for prosecution of veterans' benefits runs to an agency or individual authorized by the department.
- Provides for reimbursement of certain expenses of medal of honor recipients.
- Establishes the veterans' affairs trust fund and the military and veterans' benefits board (board).
- Provides that the board (rather than the veterans' affairs commission) administers the veterans' affairs trust fund and the military family relief fund.
- Establishes the National Guard scholarship extension fund to provide scholarships to certain former National Guard members.
- Requires the state student assistance commission to transfer on June 30, 2007, the National Guard scholarship program reserves to the National Guard scholarship extension fund.

HE 1546

Access to military discharge records

- Provides that a military discharge record is not available for public inspection and copying.
- Allows the veteran who is the subject of the record, a veterans' service officer, an employee of the Indiana department of veterans' affairs, a funeral director, the spouse or next of kin of a deceased veteran, and other persons under a court order to have access to the record.
- Provides that: (1) for military discharge records filed before May 15, 2007, a county recorder must, to the extent technologically feasible, take precautions to prevent the disclosure of a military discharge record; and (2) after May 14, 2007, a county recorder must maintain military discharge records in a separate, confidential, and secure file from other records. A valid photo ID must be provided.

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HE 1092

Military service benefits

- Establishes an unpaid leave of absence of up to 10 working days for the spouse, parent, grandparent, or sibling of a person ordered to active duty in the United States armed forces or the National Guard.
- Requires an employee to provide written notice and a copy of the active duty orders, if available, before taking the leave.
- Provides that an employee taking leave is permitted, or may be required, to use certain paid leave to which the employee is entitled.
- Requires an employee to be restored to the position that the employee held before the leave or to an equivalent position.
- Requires an employer to permit an employee who is taking a leave to continue the employee's health care benefits at the employee's expense.
- Provides equitable remedies for violations.
- Provides for grants from the military family relief fund for child care assistance.
- Provides that a person who furnishes lodging for compensation commits a class C infraction if the person refuses to rent a room to an individual who is (1) under 21 years of age; and (2) on active military duty. Exempts an individual on active military duty from serving on a jury.



IDVA Fall Conference Announced

The IDVA Fall Conference will be conducted at the Clifty Inn at Clifty Falls State Park, Madison, Indiana on Thursday, October 25, 2007. The conference will start at 9:00 a.m.. and end at noon, followed by lunch and a tour of the Indiana Veterans' Memorial Cemetery for those who wish the tour. Coffee and the buffet lunch will be provided free-of-charge by IDVA.

We need to know approximately how many CVSOs will attend and how many will come down the night before the conference. Please contact Cheryl at IDVA (800) 400-4520) and give her the following information:

Who you are.

Will you attend?

Will you reserve a room at the Clifty Inn at Clifty Falls for the evening of 24 October 2007?

Following is the agenda for the Fall Conference:

Thursday, 25 October 2007

Coffee will be available

9:00 – 9:10 a.m.. Welcome/Pledge of Allegiance

9:10 – 9:50 a.m. John Myers VA Vocational Rehabilitation

9:50 – 10:00 a.m.. Break

10:00 – 10:50 a.m.. Dennis Kuewa & Bob Linden - VA Regional Office.

10:50 – 11:00 a.m.. Break

11:00 – 11:50 a.m.. Dave Dezern - Nursing Home/Assisted Living Eligibility

11:50 a.m.. – 12:00 p.m.. Adjourn to The Falls Restaurant for free lunch buffet

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.. Lunch

1:00 – 1:20 p.m.. Travel to Indiana Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

1:20 – 2:15 p.m.. Tour of Cemetery (for those who wish to do so)

2:15 p.m.. Release



Hoosier killed in Vietnam War buried



Associated Press

FORT WAYNE, Ind. -- An Army captain whose helicopter went down in bad weather over Vietnam 37 years ago was laid to rest Friday.

Capt. Herbert Crosby was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. He was 22 when the helicopter gunship he was piloting crashed in January 1970. A search found no trace of the Huey or its crew.

In 1989, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam gave U.S. officials 25 boxes containing human remains. A 1994 search of the crash site recovered more remains and artifacts. Last December -- using DNA provided by Crosby's two sisters -- his remains were officially identified.

Twenty-seven members of Crosby's family boarded a bus bound for the cemetery at 3 a.m. Thursday to attend the ceremony. They remembered him with humor and sadness.

"I think the biggest thing is knowing what happened to him," said friend Kathy Sult. "We knew he was gone, and his soul went to heaven. But it's knowing what happened to him."

"We never really knew for sure until a few months ago," said Sult's brother, Mike Bobilya.

Now that they do, he says it's not without difficulties.

"You spend all of these years trying to forget that stuff, then all of a sudden here it is again. Now some guys thrive on that," Bobilya said. "They're not reliving the misery of it, though, they're reliving the comradeship."

Mike, his brother Ed and Crosby served consecutive tours in Vietnam -- '67, '68, '69.

"You keep thinking, he's still there, you know, he's somewhere, he's going to come home ... till you really realize he's not," said Linda Archbold, Bobilya's sister. "My mother has flown a POW flag ever since Herbie was missing. It'll come down now."

The Indiana Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom Memorial Wall

The following are casualties since the last IDVA Update



U.S. Army Private Kelly Youngblood, 19, formerly of LaPorte, Indiana.

Died 18 February 2007 in Ramadi, Iraq, by a sniper while getting out of a tank he had been driving. Youngblood was deployed in January, and had just gotten off his shift when he was fatally shot.



U.S. Army Private First Class Jason Johns, 19, Frankton, Indiana

Died February 21, 2007 in Afghanistan of a non-combat related injury in Bagram. Johns was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



U.S. Army Sgt. William J. "B.J." Beardsley, 25, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Died Feb. 26, 2007 in Diwaniyah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle.

Sgt Beardsley was assigned to the 260th Quartermaster Battalion, 3rd Sustainment Troop Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga..



U.S. Army First Lieutenant Neale Shank, 25, Avilla, Indiana.

He died on March 31, 2007 in Baghdad from a non-combat-related incident. He was assigned to the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, N.Y.

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Indiana Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Bradley D. King, 28, Lafontaine, Indiana.

Died April 2, 2007 as a result of injuries received from an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations in Al Amiriyah, Iraq.

Staff Sgt. King deployed as a member of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 152nd Infantry headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind., but had been reassigned from the battalion headquarters located in Marion, Ind.



United States Army Private First Class David Neil Simmons, 20, Kokomo, Indiana.

Pvt. Simmons was killed April 8, 2007 when the Army vehicle he was driving in Baghdad was attacked and exploded. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division based in Fort Benning, GA.



U.S. Army Specialist Cody Putman, 20, of the Lafayette, Indiana area.

Died April 12, 2007 in Iraq. He was a member of the 40th Cavalry Regiment, based in Alaska.



U.S. Marine Corps 1st Lieutenant Shaun M. Blue, 25, Munster, Indiana.

Killed April 16, 2007 during combat operations in Al Anbar province. He was a member of the I Marine Expeditionary Force based in Twentynine

Palms, Calif.



U.S. Army Pfc Richard P. Langenbrunner, 19, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Died April 17, 2007 in Rustamiyah, Iraq of injuries he suffered in a non-combat incident.



U.S. Army Pfc. David A. Kirkpatrick, 20, of Upland, Indiana

Died April 27 in Fallujah, Iraq, of wounds sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. Assigned to the 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.;



Army Spc. Andrew R. Weiss, 28, of Lafayette, Indiana

Died May 3 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Assigned to the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas;



U.S. Army Sergeant Anthony J. Schober, 23, Nevada (father from Indianapolis, Indiana)

Died in Al Taqa, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was initially reported as "Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown" on May 12, 2007, when his patrol received small arms fire and explosives. On May 17, 2007 his remains were identified.



United States Army Pfc Nick Hartge, 20, of Rome City, Indiana.

Died May 14, 2007 in Iraq. He was serving with the 1st Infantry Division and was deployed to Iraq in August. He was stationed in Baghdad.



U.S. Army Sergeant Robert J. Montgomery, 29, of Scottsburg, Indiana.

Died on May 22, 2007, in Iraq. Sergeant Montgomery was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska.

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Army Spc. Clinton C. Blodgett19, of Pekin, Ind.iana

Died May, 26, Baghdad, Iraq. Assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany; died May 26 in Baghdad when the vehicle he was in struck an improvised explosive device.



Technical Sgt. Ryan A. Balmer, 33, Mishawaka, Indiana

Died June 5, 2007, Kirkuk, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in He was assigned as a special agent to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.



Staff Sgt. Michael A. Bechert, 24, New Castle, Indiana

Died June 14, 2007 he was wounded when his vehicle struck an explosive device on May 30 in Baghdad. He died Thursday in San Antonio, Texas. Bechert was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division based in Schweinfurt, Germany.



Director's Comments

The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs has worked very hard this legislative session to see some very important bills through the process. The passage of Senate

Enrolled Act 480 (outlined elsewhere in this newsletter) is of historical significance. This is the most comprehensive veteran-related legislation to be passed in Indiana in over 20 years. It updates a decades-old income tax deduction for all military personnel and military retirees, and acknowledges that when a military member receives orders to be deployed, they should be tax-exempt for the entire period of their orders. It extends a financial and educational security to military families which heretofore has been missing. And it creates a board which, in the end, may bring Indiana's veteran's benefits fully into the 21st Century. We've also been able to tighten up the criteria to be employed as a County Veterans' Service Officer and no longer have to rely on the Indiana Administrative Code. CVSOs, by law, have to be a veteran of at least 6 months of active duty service. I am proud to have been able to participate in this process.